The Run-off Primary, Blacks, and the Democratic Party

The Reverend Jesse Jackson, in his campaign for the Democratic party's presidential nomination, has criticized run-off primaries as a form of discrimination against blacks. Jackson contends that run-off primaries, also known as second primaries, reduce the chances of black candidates winning their party's nomination for office. He has made the elimination of these primaries a principal goal of his candidacy and perhaps a condition of his support for the Democratic party presidential nominee.

This position has stirred considerable controversy over the effects of run-off primaries and what, if anything, should be done about them.

1. What is a run-off primary?

If three or more candidates run for nomination in a partisan primary and none receives a majority of the votes cast, several states require a *run-off,* or *second,* primary. In the runoff, the two highest vote getters must compete head to head, and the winner is the party's nominee. Sometimes the candidate who won the largest number of votes in the first primary loses in the run-off.

Run-off elections are also held in some jurisdictions with nonpartisan election systems. After an open primary in which any qualified voter—not just party members—can vote, a run-off election is held in which the two highest voter getters compete for office. Both run-off primaries and run-off general elections are "majority vote requirements," but in the latter, candidates compete in only two elections, while a run-off primary means candidates must run three times—in two primaries and in the general election.

2. Where are run-off primaries used?

Run-off primaries are mandated by law in nine southern states—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas—and in Oklahoma. In most of these states, state law requires run-off primaries for federal and state offices and local laws require run-off primaries for local elections.

Run-off primaries are almost unknown outside the South, although a few places have modified run-off systems, in which a run-off is required only if no candidate receives a minimum percentage of the votes cast. For example, Iowa requires a minimum of 35 percent and New York City requires a 40 percent vote in the first primary.

Louisiana and a few cities, such as Boston, have nonpartisan run-off elections. Many local jurisdictions in the South have attempted to institute nonpartisan majority-vote systems since 1965 but have met with objections by the Justice Department under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

3. When were run-off primaries instituted?

The southern states began to adopt the run-off primaries at the beginning of this century, during the same period that statewide primaries—often white primaries—were begun. Mississippi was the first state to mandate run-off primaries, in 1902. Other states conducted run-offs even before it became a legal requirement: South Carolina, for example, used run-off primaries from 1896 on, but wrote the requirement into law only in 1915. By 1939, all the nine southern states had adopted the procedure.

4. Were run-off primaries instituted in order to restrict black political power?

Because run-off primaries were instituted at the same time blacks were being successfully disenfranchised by other means, some analysts have concluded that their intent was not discriminatory. These analysts have linked the procedure to the existence of one-party politics in the South. They argue that it facilitated intraparty factional competition by allowing several candidates to compete while ensuring majority decisions.

Other analysts, however, have argued that the purpose of run-off primaries could well have been to reinforce the exclusion of blacks from political power, especially since some blacks continued to vote in the South well after the major disenfranchisement measures were adopted.

Both purposes could have been intended; exclusion of black voters or dilution of their votes has shaped the character of southern politics for the last century.

5. How do run-off primaries affect black candidates?

Those who argue most strongly for the abolition of run-off primaries focus on the experiences of black candidates. In a number of contests for elective office—federal, state, and local—black candidates have led in the first primary, only to be defeated in the run-off. In these cases, black voters had united behind the black candidate, while white voters had split their votes in support of two or more white candidates in the first round, but united behind the leading white candidate in the run-off.

The best-known recent example is the 1982 Democratic congressional primary in the second district in North Carolina. There, H. M. "Mickey" Michaux, a black candidate, led in the first primary with 44.5 percent of the vote, but lost in the run-off when white voters coalesced behind Tim Valentine, a white candidate who had received only 32.7 percent of the vote in the first round. Other black candidates who lost run-offs after leading the field in the first primary include James Clyburn, who won 43.0 percent of the vote in the first primary for the 1978 Democratic nomination for Secretary of State in South Carolina; and Charles Evers, who won 29.3 percent of the vote in the first primary of a 1968 special election to fill a vacancy in the third congressional district in Mississippi.

It is possible, of course, for the run-off primary to help a black candidate. For example, in a district with a solid black majority, the black vote could be split among several candidates in the first round but coalesce in the second in support of the black front-runner. Such an outcome is possible in three southern congressional districts, Georgia's fifth, Louisiana's second, and Mississippi's second currently represented by Wyche Fowler, Lindy Boggs, and Webb Franklin, respectively.

In fact, some political scientists suggest that as blacks become more successful at winning primaries and elections, it will be increasingly difficult to maintain unity behind a single minority candidate. And similar problems may arise in states that have two different sizable minority populations. In Texas, for example, blacks and Hispanics have often been able to agree on a single candidate in an election, but competition may increase—especially if run-off primaries are eliminated. As more minority candidates seek office, the run-off might well work to the advantage of the minority community. Up to now, however, such instances have been rare.

There is little doubt, then, that runoff primaries hurt the prospects of black candidates under certain circumstances. Where there is white bloc voting and a large but less-than-majority black population, the run-off hurts black candidates. On the other hand, where blacks comprise a solid majority of the population, runoffs clearly do not hurt black candidates. Likewise, where blacks are only a small proportion of the voting population, and white bloc voting is the norm, a run-off system will seldom affect the chance of a black candidate, which will be low to begin with.

6. Do run-off primaries encourage coalition building?

Some supporters of the run-off primary suggest that the run-off might encourage white candidates to seek coalitions across racial lines and thus increase the influence of black voters, even if it does hurt black candidates. They note that in a run-off election between two white candidates, the candidates might compete for the black vote by showing responsiveness to black concerns.

Supporters of run-off primaries sometimes point to examples of moderate or liberal whites who came in second to more conservative whites in first primaries but won run-offs. Mississippi Governor William Winter's victory in 1979 and Lester Maddox's loss in 1974 are frequently cited. There are numerous counter-examples, however—Winter himself would have won the governorship twelve years ago had he not lost a run-off; Lester Maddox launched his career in 1966 by coming from behind in a second primary to beat Ellis Arnall. Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus also got his start by coming from behind in a second primary.

7. Will eliminating run-off primaries result in more successful black candidates?

Speculation on this question has ranged widely. Run-off primary systems, of course, are part of an overall political picture, and if they are eliminated, other parts of the picture will change as well. Without run-offs to ensure white victory, whites may tend to unite behind a single white candidate in the first primary to avoid opening an opportunity for black success. There is some historic evidence that Democratic politics in Virginia and Tennessee, which do not have run-off primaries, is much less factionalized than politics in the southern states that do have run-offs.

Blacks may be encouraged to run in races they had previously considered hopeless; but in some cases, they may run against each other, dividing black votes. Black candidacies would increase black voter participation overall.

Whether blacks who did succeed in capturing the nomination would have a better chance of winning the election has been the subject of much debate. Would whites desert the Democratic party as more blacks win nominations? Since objections to run-off primaries are postulated on the existence of white bloc voting, it is quite possible that many white Democrats would vote Republican rather than support a black Democratic nominee.

8. Do the negative effects of run-offs amount to discrimination against blacks?

Certainly, run-off primaries are not inherently discriminatory against blacks. In a majority-black electorate, for instance, run-offs do not hurt blacks. But such mechanisms as poll taxes, literacy tests, or at-large elections are not inherently discriminatory either. None of these mechanisms can be evaluated apart from the electoral context in which it is used.

The Justice Department, in reviewing changes submitted for preclearance under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, evaluates the potential for discriminatory effects in the context of local circumstances. The burden of proving that the changes do not discriminate is on the local jurisdiction, but the Justice Department has concluded in many instances that run-offs can have a discriminatory effect. For example, in objecting to voting law changes submitted for preclearance in 1978 by Mullins, South Carolina, the Justice Department stated,

> Because of the potential for diluting black voting strength inherent in the use of a majority vote requirement under circumstances such as exist in Mullins and because the city has advanced no compelling reason for its use, we are unable to conclude . . . that the imposition of the majority requirement, in the context of an at-large election system, will not have a racially discriminatory effect.

In a letter responding to a request for reconsideration of the objection, the Justice Department added:

> our analysis of election returns reveals evidence of racial bloc voting, and our research indicates that black candidates may be deterred by the existence of a majority vote requirement.

According to the ACLU, the Justice Department objected to majority-vote requirement under Section 5 (of the Voting Rights Act) in 66 submissions between 1975 and 1980. In most of these cases, the majority-vote requirement was tied to a nonpartisan election, not a partisan primary, and was one of a number of potentially discriminatory electoral arrangements.

In 1981, the Civil Rights Commission also acknowledged the discriminatory effects of majority vote requirements on blacks in the South:

> The effect of this rule majority vote upon minority candidates can be significant, especially in jurisdictions where whites are in a majority and consistently refuse to support minority candidates . . . Under a majority-vote rule, a run-off with a white candidate in these circumstances would generally result in defeat.

Notable recent elections such as 1983 mayoral election in Chicago demonstrate that plurality primaries can substantially increase the prospects for success by a black candidate. It is in part the contrast between the outcome in Chicago in 1983 and that in North Carolina's 2nd district in 1982 that has heightened concern about the adverse effects of the run-off primary.

9. Does the run-off primary enhance majority rule and the quality of representation?

The run-off primary, with its requirement for nomination by a majority rather than a plurality, appeals to the public's belief in majority rule. And several analysts have attempted to portray it as merely implementing this principle. Others suggest that the requirement increases the chances for the selection of representatives with broad appeal and for excluding extremist candidates.

In fact, however, American politics relies overwhelmingly on plurality elections. Forty of the 50 states and the overwhelming majority of municipalities do not require majority votes either to nominate or to elect candidates.

Moreover, because turnout usually falls off in run-off elections, the winning candidate in the second round sometimes actually receives fewer votes than the front-runner did in the first round. For example, in the 1972 Texas Senatorial primary, turnout dropped by 130,000, and Ralph Yarborough was beaten by Harold Barefoot Sanders even though Yarborough received 25,000 more votes in the first primary than Sanders did in the second. And ironically, the jurisdictions that have insisted on majority vote primaries are the very ones that have historically maintained major barriers to voting.

There is no basis for determining whether the quality of representation is enhanced by the run-off requirement. One might assume that a candidate elected with a majority of the votes cast has the support of a broader segment of the electorate than one who is elected by a plurality. However, given the fall-off in voting that usually occurs in run-off elections, that assumption might not be justified. Furthermore, so many factors affect the quality of representation that it would be imprudent to attach too much weight to a majority vote system as a means of ensuring a high quality of representation.

10. What can be done to eliminate run-off primaries?

Much of the controversy about run-off primaries centers on how to eliminate them, assuming their elimination is desired. Jesse Jackson has been pursuing two avenues. One is political—calling on the presidential candidates and the national Democratic party to take steps to eliminate them. The other is judicial—initiating a suit in the U.S. District Court for Northern Mississippi challenging that state's run-off primary system.

The Political Remedies. Although this approach has received the greatest attention, it is still unclear how effective a presidential candidate, the president, or the national party could be in ending run-off primaries. Any of these could seek federal legislation barring run-off primaries in congressional elections. Congress probably cannot mandate changes in state or local election laws, but such federal legislation might pressure states to bring their practices in line with federal election practices—if only for administrative convenience. However, the prospect of federal legislation against run-off primaries is very slim. There is no evidence of widespread discomfort with run-off elections, and the issue could easily create splits along regional lines.

National party officials and the candidates could also try to persuade state party officials to seek to change state laws, but this is probably even more unlikely. It is also possible that state political parties might be able to abandon run-off primaries even in states that mandate them.

Using the Courts. The Supreme Court has ruled that majority vote requirements are not *per se* unconstitutional, and recent Court interpretations of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments would make constitutional challenges very difficult.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, however, as amended in 1982, explicitly prohibits election laws or procedures that have the intent or *effect* of discriminating against minorities. The legislative history of the amendment explicitly lists the majority vote requirement as one sign of a racially discriminatory electoral system. And although there has never been a court decision solely and specifically on the majority vote requirement, courts have repeatedly recognized its place in the constellation of discriminatory devices. Thus, while the Voting Rights Act does not ban all run-offs, most run-offs would probably be found to violate the act, given the specific electoral contexts in which they are used.

But Section 2 litigation is a complex and expensive process that can drag on for years. Furthermore, it is unclear how universally applicable any ruling would be, given the "totality of circumstances" that has to be shown in each case. It is hardly the choice avenue for combating voting rights violations. Section 5 can be used to prevent changes in current laws, but it has no power over laws in effect before 1965, when the Voting Rights Act was first passed.

11. What are the alternatives to run-off primaries?

The most obvious alternative is the plurality system, which is the system used in most elections in the United States and preferred by most opponents to run-off primaries.

Some have proposed a 40 percent rule. Under this rule, a run-off would be held if no candidate received more than 40 percent of the vote. Proponents argue that a 40 percent showing indicates a substantial base of support, shutting out fringe candidates and enhancing the prospects of minority candidates in some cases. The "40 Percent Solution" is a political compromise that appears to have some support in the Democratic party.

12. What are the political implications of change?

There is considerable speculation about the effects that change in the run-off primary would have on minorities, on the political parties, and on national politics. These speculations range from sharp increases in the number of black elected officials to massive party realignment in the south—or both. But the issue is complex; several types of change are possible; and other features of local politics would almost certainly change if primaries are eliminated. It is therefore virtually impossible to do much more than identify a number of possible outcomes.

If election procedures are modified by the adoption of thresholds below 50 percent beyond which a run-off would not be required, the opportunities for minorities to win nominations would probably increase slightly with little impact on existing patterns of partisan support. Elimination of all run-off primaries might open up greatly increased opportunities for black candidates, but might also produce major changes in partisan support and in the prospects for the black candidates to win elective offices.

The principal beneficiaries of the current run-off system are white Democratic candidates in white-majority jurisdictions with substantial black populations. They would stand to lose if these primaries were eliminated or altered. If changes occur amid great controversy, and if southern white Democratic voters attach more weight to race than to partisanship, the Democratic party might be another major loser, as whites defect to Republican candidates. Such defections could be short-lived, but they could permit the Republican party to develop a grass-roots base that it does not now enjoy in the south.

Of more immediate concern to some analysts are the likely effects of change on the 1984 presidential race. The run-off primary is viewed by some observers as a black issue of dubious merit, and major concessions on this issue by the Democratic party, such as a forthright call for the elimination of run-off primaries, could enrage Democrats who already feel that the party is too sympathetic to minorities. Were such perceptions widespread in the South, Democratic candidates' chances for success could be reduced.

On the other hand, failure to address the issue might produce substantial black disenchantment with the Democratic party in 1984 and discourage turnout. Failure to be sensitive to the concerns of blacks on this issue could be as devastating to the Democratic party as failure to be sensitive to the concerns of whites.

In spite of the uncertainties and obvious risks reform poses, the issue is unlikely to disappear. The Justice Department and some southern politicians had been examining second primaries before the issue was raised on by Jesse Jackson. By focusing national attention on it, the Jackson candidacy ensures continued attention well after November.

The Historical Origins of the Run-off Primary

by J. Morgan Kousser

(Dr. Kousser is professor of history and social science at the California Institute of Technology.)

Was the adoption of the run-off primary part of a general "progressive" move to democratize elections, or was it an episode in a reactionary crusade to eliminate any chance of black influence in politics by perpetuating one-party rule?

Under the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act

and the Supreme Court's 1982 opinion in *Rogers* v. *Lodge*—its most recent major pronouncement on standards in "minority vote dilution" litigation—the prime judicial criterion for evaluating such devices as the run-off primary system will be their *effect* on the political power of racial minorities, not the *intent* of the framers or perpetuators of the laws. Nonetheless, a knowledge of the historical context in which the run-off system was adopted is still pertinent in lawsuits and may help to shape public attitudes toward abandoning or retaining the system.

Since historians have only recently turned any attention at all to the intent behind the run-off system, all the available evidence is circumstantial. But we can confidently say that direct primaries were adopted in the South at least partially to maintain white Democratic supremacy and that the run-off, adopted along with primaries themselves, functioned as a further guarantee of the partisan and racial status quo.

From Conventions to Primaries

In the post-Reconstruction South, turnout was above 60 percent of the adult southern males—including black males—during the 1880s, and the Republican, independent, and later, Populist threats to Democratic dominance remained quite real. In the 1880 presidential contest, for instance, a majority of black men are estimated to have voted in 9 of the 11 ex-Confederate states, and in 10 of those, they managed to have a majority of their votes counted for the Republican party, which they overwhelmingly supported. The South was far from "solid" yet.

Any significant bolt of whites from the Democratic or "white man's" party could well lead to defeats—and to the assumption of power by blacks and their white allies—at the local or even the state level. In Virginia, for instance, a coalition of blacks and hill-country whites, led by a Democrat discontented with his defeat in a boss-controlled party convention, ruled the state from 1879 to 1883.

The primary was recognized and touted as a minimizer of bolts. Thus, in 1878, the chairman of the Alabama Democratic Executive Committee proposed that delegates to the state convention be selected in primaries "to promote harmony... and to prevent as far as possible the occurrence of combinations injurious to the party. A Tuskegee Democratic newspaper thought the primary "the only thing that can unite and hold the party together."

Deeply divided over the question of continuing the corrupt state lottery company in 1892, Louisiana Democrats settled their differences in the first statewide primary ever held, as far as I know, in the United States. That it was limited to whites and that it came at the time of a very serious Populist and Republican challenge to Democratic control should give pause to those who picture the primary as a well-intentioned, racially neutral device to expand popular control. Likewise, in the same year, South Carolina Democrats kept the bitter split between Ben Tillman and his "conservative" opponents within the confines of the party by electing convention delegates in primaries coordinated throughout the state.

In 1895, the South Carolina Democratic Convention called for a constitutional convention to disfranchise as many blacks as possible by law; at the same time, the Democrats passed a party rule requiring nominations for state offices from 1896 on to be made by direct primaries. In case no candidate received a majority, the party provided for a run-off primary. Ben Tillman, who dominated both the party and constitutional conventions, selected the primary, according to his biographer, "as the most satisfactory means of allaying discontent within the Democratic ranks and of reducing the danger of political appeal to the Negro."

There were no other statewide direct primaries in the South (or elsewhere in the nation) during the 1890s. By 1902, when Mississippi became the first state in the Union to require, by law, the primary method of nomination for all non-judicial state officers, disfranchising conventions or constitutional amendments had severely reduced black—and poor white—voting in all eleven southern states. Since direct primaries in general and the run-off in particular were, except in South Carolina, mandated only *after* 1900, could they have had any racial intent? Since most blacks were disfranchised by then, wasn't the situation "race proof?"

Were Primaries and Run-offs Aimed Against Blacks?

The most obvious answer is that very little in the South since 1619 has been devoid of racial motives. Perhaps less obviously, the "race proof" argument depends on hindsight. When primaries, often with run-off provisions, were adopted by Democratic party rule or by law in the early part of this century, it was by no means so clear as it seemed later that party competition and black participation in politics were doomed for a half century. Furthermore, we should not underestimate either the continuing extent of black voting or the degree of southern white antipathy in the "lily white period" to any black political activity whatsoever.

That white racism has been one of the central themes of southern history is familiar enough not to need documentation. The perceived fragility of the disfranchisement settlement, however, must be shown.

According to a North Carolina editor who surveyed opinion in 1899 in three states that had held disfranchising conventions, "without the legal primary, divisions among white men might result in bringing about a return to the deplorable conditions when one faction of white men call upon the Negroes to help defeat another faction." After all, fairly administered literacy tests and funds to pay the poll taxes of potential voters could easily have enfranchised a majority of the blacks in any southern state in the early twentieth century, and Democrats feared that the self-interest of opposition politicians might, as it had during Reconstruction and the Populist eras, overcome their devotion to white supremacy. Moreover, southern moves to subvert the purposes of the Fifteenth Amendment never received the sanction of the U.S. Supreme Court, but only its agreement, in effect, not to overthrow the restrictive laws, a modus vivendi that lasted only from 1903 to 1915, when the Court overturned the Oklahoma "grandfather clause."

Furthermore, the number of blacks who were registered to vote after "disfranchisement" was small, but not negligible—9 percent in Mississippi in 1896, and 14-15 percent in South Carolina and Virginia in 1904. In certain areas, blacks might be able to elect one or more officials. Some whites, in a period when lynchings were public carnivals, were genuinely horrified by the slightest deviation from complete black subordination. More importantly, opportunistic politicians could be depended upon to whip up any racial issue for their own purposes.

Nor were blacks wholly barred from the largely locally regulated "white" primaries. In 1899 at least 200 blacks voted in a Democratic primary in one Mississippi county, and, as one historian concluded about that state as a whole, "Negroes had not been eliminated from the polls but were playing the same part a decade after [the Mississippi disfranchising convention of 1890] that they had played for a dozen or fifteen years before its adoption." The Little Rock, Arkansas, Democratic Central Committee turned down a white-only primary resolution in 1901, and Arkansas primaries became fully Caucasian only as a result of the actions of the deeply racist governor, Jeff Davis, in 1906. Aware that open, legal exclusion of blacks from the primaries would bring the risk of court action, no state before Texas in 1923 wrote a white-only provision into the law. All acted by party rule; they usually gave local Democratic committees discretion on the matter; and

some areas never established utterly white primaries.

There was, then, an incentive for white Southern Democrats in the early 1900s to seek to reinforce the exclusion of blacks from electoral power.

The Mississippi legislature passed a bill imposing a primary and containing a run-off requirement in 1902. "The salvation of our State," backers of a primary with a run-off contended, "depends on the unity of our white people. This vote can only be secured by ascertaining and effectuating the choice of [the] majority, to the exclusion of Negroes." That white Democratic party hegemony was a prime motive for the adoption of the primary in Mississippi was also openly avowed by the chief sponsor of the 1902 law, Edmund F. Noel, in a 1904 article: "White supremacy could be maintained only by the members of that race remaining together politically, otherwise comparatively few Negroes who are qualified to vote might wield the balance of power. No political organization can long be kept from factional contests, without confidence in the fairness of its methods of ascertaining and carrying into effect the will of the majority. . . . Conventions or mass meetings as the ultimate method of expressing popular choice would not be tolerated in any civilized community. . ."

In 1901, Florida provided by statute for a non-mandatory primary containing a run-off provision. The Alabama Democratic Executive Committee, which set temporary rules for each election, provided for run-offs in 1902 and 1914. South Carolina conducted run-off elections by party regulation from 1896 on, and wrote the provision into law in 1915. Texas in 1903 and 1905 required primaries for state offices by law, but left it up to the party whether or not to declare a majority or plurality vote sufficient. In 1907, the legislature specified a plurality win system; much later, it reinstated the run-off system. The Louisiana legislature passed a majority-vote requirement in 1906. After a particularly racially demagogic gubernatorial campaign in Georgia in 1906, the convention delegates elected in the indirect primary for governor backed not only a constitutional convention to restrict black suffrage, but also Georgia's first statewide direct primary. Its run-off provision was modified two years later to provide that the candidate had to receive a majority of the "county unit" vote. Tennessee Democrats authorized a primary in 1908, and a run-off requirement in 1909, but after the law as a whole was voided by the courts, the majority clause was dropped. North Carolina mandated statewide primaries with a majority vote proviso in 1915.

Neither historians nor political scientists have investigated the intent of the original framers specifically on run-off requirements. There is likely to be little direct evidence about their purpose, since they were often adopted at non-public party executive committee meetings, and even in cases when they were written into law, the surviving evidence from state legislative records will probably not be conclusive. None of the southern state assemblies recorded debates or printed committee reports; newspaper stories on any but the most controversial amendments are usually uninformative; and few legislators left collections of their papers. There was lots of press discussion about the general principles of primaries and conventions, but little on such specific topics as the run-off.

Popular discussions stressed not only the party-strengthening features of primaries, but also the shift in control toward "the people"—loyal white Democrats—which the primary allegedly fostered. These two purposes were, of course, completely complimentary. Had the primary not quieted protests against clique or "ring" domination, it would not have been an effective means of confining dissent within the Democratic party.

The indirect evidence from the pattern of adoptions of the run-offs suggests that the racial motives for choosing the device were hardly absent. South Carolina, which had the largest proportion of blacks of any state in 1900, was the first to put the statewide primary and the run-off into regular use. The South Carolina Democratic convention that proposed the scheme also called for state constitutional action to disfranchise blacks. Mississippi, which had the second largest percentage of blacks, became the first state to mandate the run-off primary by law, and Alabama acted by party rule in the same year. Florida, still over 40 percent black at the turn of the century, held its first run-off in 1904, and Louisiana, third in black proportion, acted by law in 1906. Among the eleven ex-Confederate states, only Arkansas in the Deep South and the border state of Virginia, its machine and anti-machine factions solidified early, never instituted the double primary during the first two decades of this century. No northern state, not even such uncompetitive ones as Maine, Vermont, and Kansas, ever experimented with run-off primaries.

In sum, then, the run-off should be seen as a device intended to strengthen the primary itself as a means of solidifying the southern Democratic parties against opposition, and particularly opposition by blacks or through appeals to blacks.

SOUTHERN VOTER REGISTRATION, 1980-84

At last, up-to-date registration figures for the South are available. They show clearly the upsurge in black registration—especially in contrast to the mixed picture for whites.

	White Registration			Black Registration		
State	1980	1984	Change	1980	1984	Change
Alabama	1,700,000	1,664,000	−36,000	350,000	482,000	+132,000
Arkansas	1,056,000	964,000	−92,000	130,000	155,000	+25,000
Florida	4,331,000	4,337,000	+6,000	489,000	517,000	+28,000
Georgia	1,800,000	1,787,000	−13,000	450,000	512,000	+62,000
Louisiana	1,550,000	1,609,000	+59,000	465,000	535,000	+70,000
Mississippi	1,152,000	1,144,000	−8,000	330,000	406,000	+76,000
No. Carolina	2,314,000	2,369,000	+55,000	440,000	565,000	+125,000
So. Carolina	916,000	848,000	−68,000	320,000	331,000	+11,000
Tennessee	2,200,000	2,082,000	−118,000	300,000	348,000	+48,000
Texas	6,020,000	6,042,000	+22,000	620,000	720,000	+100,000
Virginia	1,942,000	1,908,000	−34,000	360,000	378,000	+18,000
Total	24,981,000	24,754,000	−227,000	4,254,000	4,949,000	+695,000

Source: Data from *American Political Report*, May 18, 1984. Some data from the Voter Education Project.

The Debt of Developing Nations

by Toni Schmiegelow

(The author is a lending officer at Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company in New York.)

Nearly 100 African, Asian, and Latin American nations together owe at least $700 billion to banks in the industrial world—a sum more than double the value of the capital controlled by these banks. This debt has become the subject of considerable attention for several reasons: concern that the international banking system may fail if these loans are not repaid; uncertainty about the credit-worthiness of Third World countries; and fear that the banks may refuse to extend additional credit to these countries. In some quarters the situation is viewed as a crisis.

Bail-out or Good Business?

According to international economist John P. Lewis, a former member of the Council of Economic Advisors, the international banking system is in no danger of collapse. Lewis's optimism is based on several countermeasures being taken to remedy the situation. For example, when Argentina recently neared default on its $500 million interest payments, representatives of U.S. banks, the Treasury Department, and the International Monetary Fund, along with Argentina and other Latin American countries, hammered out an eleventh-hour solution. Their plan called for Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, and Columbia to put up $300 million, with repayment guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury Department, provided Argentina reached agreement with the International Monetary Fund on reorganizing its economy. To complete the package, Argentina agreed to contribute $100 million from its own foreign exchange reserves, and 11 major banks, 5 American and 6 foreign, offered to loan Argentina $100 million at extremely low interest rates.

In another countermeasure, Congress passed a bill in November 1983 that increased by $8.4 billion the U.S. contribution to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Congressional Quarterly described this measure as Congress' "biggest legislative deal of 1983," because it combined in a single bill the increased contribution to the IMF, which the Reagan administration wanted, and a $15.6 billion housing authorization sought by Democrats. This odd linkage resulted from protracted negotiations involving House and Senate leaders and administration officials, most notably White House Budget Director David A. Stockman and Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan. The final compromise attests to the importance the administration attached to its objective in the deliberations: in order to secure the IMF funding, the White House accepted a housing bill it otherwise opposed.

Opponents of the increased funding have branded it a bail-out of big American banks, which will lose billions if loans they made to the Third World are not repaid. Critics argue that these institutions alone should shoulder the risks inherent in their business and charge that the funding measure was drafted to ensure major U.S. banks a handsome profit, since Third World countries will use the IMF funds to repay high-interest loans.

The Reagan administration and other supporters of the IMF increase hold that Third World countries are dependent on the fund's resources to prevent economic collapse and, further, that U.S. exporters require the maintenance of stable economies in these countries to ensure markets for their goods.

Another, occasional, remedy for Third World debt problems is so-called "bridge financing," short-term financing arranged by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), a Swiss-based institution whose purpose is to foster international monetary cooperation. When a debtor nation is unable to make scheduled repayments and requests debt rescheduling and additional loans from the IMF, BIS secures short-term loans for that nation from the central banks of various industrialized nations. These loans are repaid immediately with a portion of the new IMF funds. This measure was used recently in both Mexico and Brazil.

Lewis also points to other, more permanent solutions to the debt crisis through structural changes in debtor nations to balance spending and revenues. Such changes include devaluation of national currencies, reductions in imports and domestic food subsidies, and the scaling down of many state-run organizations, airlines and steel industries among them. But this approach assumes—implausibly—that it is possible to enforce severe belt-tightening policies in countries where belts are already tight without causing serious and perhaps dangerous political problems.

In the long run, such structural changes will have to be accompanied by a more even balance of trade between developing and industrialized nations. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has noted that this combination would lessen the risk of political upheavals and put Third World countries in a better position to repay their debt, thereby reducing the risk of a worldwide banking crisis.

Repayment Problems

Were Third World countries more credit-worthy years ago when the banks extended so much credit? Or were the banks, newly flush with OPEC cash, over-eager to turn these abundant deposits into profit-making loans? Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan is inclined toward the first alternative; he sees the current problem not as a sudden development but as a result of economic policies followed over the past two decades.

Others—including some members of Congress who opposed the increased IMF funding and some bankers—attribute the present situation to the greed of major banks. One group of former bankers complained to *Businessweek* magazine that they were pressured into making loans to Third World countries because growth and profits from such loans had already been budgeted. The chief Latin American economist for a major New York bank recalled that the bank went ahead with loans to Brazil even after he advised his chairman that Brazil's appetite for foreign loans was excessive.

In either case, during the inflationary times of the 1970s, most less-developed countries (LDCs) were able to borrow large amounts of money easily, which they did. They borrowed primarily from large commercial banks in the industrial countries, and by the middle of 1982, non-OPEC developing countries had run up debts of over $500 billion—more than

(Continued on page 11)

Telescope

Glenn Watts Joins JCPS Board of Governors

The Joint Center for Political Studies' newest board member, Glenn E. Watts, is president of the Communications Workers of America and has been actively involved with the union for more than 40 years. He is chairman of the AFL-CIO's public relations committee and co-chair of the Democratic National Committee's Labor Advisory Council. Watts is a trustee of the Ford Foundation; president of the Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International (an organization of communications workers throughout the world); and secretary-treasurer of the American Institute for Free Labor Development.

Conference on "The Civil Rights Act: Two Decades Later"

The Joint Center will host a conference commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act on June 28th and 29th at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. The Conference will consist of three parts: "Basic Goals and Public Attitudes" will be discussed on Thursday morning; "The Effects of the Civil Rights Act," on Thursday afternoon; and "Politics, Coalitions, and Civil Rights," on Friday morning. See Perspective for some details on the program. Attendance is free; for further information, call 202 626-3533

Youth Service USA, Inc.

In communities across the country, the military is working with business, government, and civilian sectors to provide socioeconomically disadvantaged youth with job skills, under a program called Youth Service USA, Inc. The program is unlike many other job training efforts in that community-based organizations often coordinate the programs, using the services of others in the community to carry out program activities: local businesses provide jobs to graduates; the military volunteers in-kind contributions (such as use of the military base), services, and training; schools provide education and technical skills; and foundations, corporations, and state and local governments provide funds to support the program. Students receive on-the-job training in learning the skills to become auto mechanics, equipment operators, electronic technicians, CRT (cathode ray tube) operators, secretaries, and photographers.

The program was started in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1963, when a social service agency began to take groups of youngsters camping in the state parks around the city. Years later—as a way to keep youngsters off the streets during the summer after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated—the program requested and was granted use of the vast recreational facilities—swimming pools, lakes, gymnasiums, bowling alleys, horses—of the Naval Air Station north of Memphis. The effort was enormously successful, and the program quickly expanded from purely recreational activities to include job training. Other cities soon began to organize similar efforts at their local military installations.

Youth Service USA hopes to expand the program nationwide and is looking for civilian groups and businesses that may be interested in becoming involved. For more information, contact Director of Development, Youth Service USA, Inc., Youth Service Bldg., 314 South Goodlett St., Memphis, Tenn. 38117; telephone (901) 454-4900.

Debt

(Continued from page 10)

five times their foreign debt level of 1973. Then conditions changed.

Repayment problems were brought on by several factors: sharp increases in the price of oil, which required the LDCs to borrow even more; general inflation, which led to higher interest rates on this increasing debt; and then a worldwide depression, which thwarted the LDCs' expectations that inflation would allow them to sell their goods for higher prices. An oil glut also reduced the revenues of oil-exporting LDCs. For all LDCs, then, debt continued to increase and the ability to repay decreased.

Needed: A "North-South" Dialogue

The need for a solution to the problem of Third World debt has focused increased attention on the "North-South" dialogue, a term used to describe aid and trade negotiations that have been going on since the early 1960s between LDCs and wealthy industrialized nations. (Most LDCs lie south of the Equator; most wealthy nations are found in the northern latitudes.) Initiated by the LDCs and held under the auspices of UNCTAD, these discussions have focused on ways of creating higher prices and a more open market for commodities such as sugar, coffee, and cocoa that are exported from the South to the North.

These issues came to a head after the countries in the South found that prices for oil and manufactured goods—products they needed to import—were rising disproportionately to the prices their exports were able to command. In some cases, industrialized nations had set up protectionist measures that made the LDCs' commodities less competitive and created a trade situation in which LDCs spent more than they were earning. To finance this trade deficit, these countries were obligated to borrow from commercial banks or seek alternative forms of aid from the wealthy nations, which only increased the original imbalance.

To remedy this imbalance, the North-South negotiators have been considering the establishment of a new international financial system. The South favors the creation of a commodity cartel, modeled on the OPEC oil cartel, which would allow Third World nations to control prices and distribution.

In the past, the LDCs have employed a strategy of confrontation at the discussion table. Recently, however, a new, more moderate tack has guided their talks. The LDCs have also shifted their focus from broad-reaching structural changes to more specific, immediate objectives such as automatic debt relief, an increase in world liquidity through the International Monetary Fund, greater aid and private bank lending to developing nations, and freer access to northern markets for their exports.

This approach may well have been devised to take advantage of the developed world's concern about a banking crisis. The industrialized world has acknowledged its interdependency with LDCs: it needs both their exports and their markets, and the banking system of the developed nations has become inextricably linked to the economic health of the Third World. This recognition of interdependency on the part of both North and South bodes well for genuine progress in resolving the debt and trade problems plaguing the Third World.

The Folly of the Subminimum Wage

by Bernard Anderson

(Dr. Anderson is director of the division of social sciences of the Rockefeller Foundation.)

The Reagan administration has submitted legislation to Congress adopting a subminimum wage as a device for reducing teenage unemployment. The National Conference of Black Mayors has endorsed the idea. This unusual combination has contributed to growing interest in this approach.

The available evidence, however, suggests that a subminimum wage would reduce neither overall youth unemployment nor minority youth unemployment in particular. A subminimum wage is bad economic policy and abominable social policy.

Many economists argue that minimum wage legislation greatly reduces youth opportunities and is especially harmful to minority group teenagers. And indeed, youth unemployment has drifted upward during the past several decades as the federal minimum wage rose to the current level of $3.35 an hour. But to attribute the increase in youth unemployment entirely to the increase in the minimum wage would be like suggesting that the Georgetown University NCAA basketball championship was generated by the enthusiasm of Hoya fans. Obviously, other factors were also involved.

The rise in teenage unemployment has been influenced by the dramatic increase in the size of the youth and female labor forces, competition from the increasing number of immigrant workers, the declining number of semi-skilled jobs in urban areas, and the changing technology of production. Rising teenage unemployment is also related to the upward drift of unemployment for the labor force as a whole, which averaged 4.8 percent during the 1960s, 6.2 percent during the 1970s, and 8.1 percent since 1980.

The congressionally mandated Minimum Wage Study Commission conducted several careful studies of the effects of minimum wages on youth employment, and in its final report concluded that a subminimum wage would not reduce teenage unemployment significantly and would do little to increase employment among economically disadvantaged, minority-group teenagers.

The experience under the Youth Incentive Employment Entitlement (YIEE) program supported by the U.S. Department of Labor from 1978 through 1980 also casts doubts on the potential for a subminimum wage to generate more private sector jobs for disadvantaged youth. Under the entitlement program, employers were reimbursed for all wage and benefit costs for hiring economically disadvantaged teenagers who agreed to remain in or return to school. The private sector hired only 21 percent of the 76,000 youths employed in the 17 communities in which the program operated. If private employers are reluctant to hire youth at *no* cost, it is difficult to believe substantially more jobs will be created by a reduction in the minimum wage.

The black mayors say it is time to experiment, and it is easy to sympathize with their frustration and desire for a solution to the continuing problem of youth unemployment. But experiments have already been done. In the last year of the YIEE, a demonstration project designed to test the effect of different subminimum wages was conducted in Baltimore and Detroit. It showed that only 1 in 10 firms eligible to employ teenagers at 25 percent of the minimum wage—and only 1 in 20 eligible to hire them at 50 percent of the minimum—actually hired low-income youth. Only about 18 percent of the firms eligible for a 100 percent wage subsidy hired a low-income teenager.

Many suggest that youth should be employed at subminimum wages to give them the training and experience necessary to increase their productivity. But, in fact, little or no useful training or experience can be obtained in the marginal, dead-end jobs likely to be filled by teenagers hired at the subminimum-wage level. Many such jobs that do offer the minimum wage now go begging because of poor working conditions and lack of opportunity for training and advancement.

The new Jobs Training Partnership Act holds much more promise of providing the kind of training and work experience youth need to get a foothold in

(Continued on page 4)

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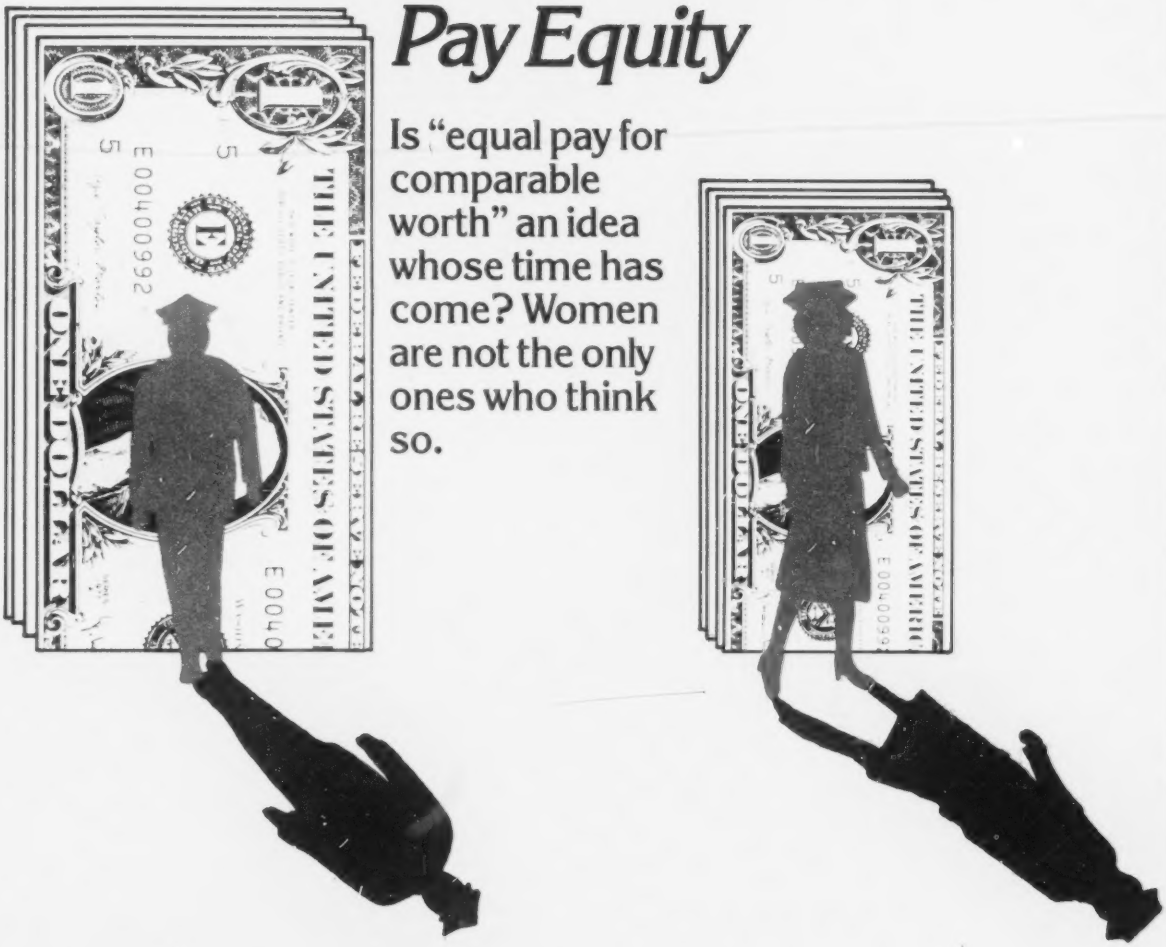

Pay Equity

Is "equal pay for comparable worth" an idea whose time has come? Women are not the only ones who think so.

Poverty and Public Policy

Federal programs have reduced poverty for older Americans more than for youth—a fact that has racial overtones.

Hungry Children in America

Is there really hunger in America? There wasn't much in the 1970s, thanks to federal programs. There is now, yet further budget cuts are proposed.

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Joint Center for Political Studies

Perspective

With many signs of victory for the Jesse Jackson campaign now apparent, we must take steps to ensure that the emerging black political movement survives the approaching election and continues to expand. Blacks must use their growing political influence to help shape and implement public policies in which their interests and those of the nation converge.

How can this goal be accomplished? More blacks must seek leadership roles in the political arena. Already, the Jackson candidacy has brought some new faces into politics. Having tasted the fruits of success, these newcomers are not likely to disappear soon, and they may well attract others who were formerly uninvolved in the nation's system of governance.

Concerning the larger electorate, black leaders must find ways to excite the black community and channel its political energy into the ongoing pursuit of racial justice. The black church will undoubtedly continue to play a major role in this mobilization. So, too, will such organizations as the Voter Education Project and the National Coalition on Black Voter Participation. Our civic, fraternal, civil rights, and professional organizations, which have recently become more politically active, can also make an enormous contribution to voter education and motivation. Lastly, we should encourage the enthusiasm of our young people, many of whom have been inspired by the Jackson candidacy. Since nothing breeds success like success, the more victories blacks achieve in the political arena, the more they will want to participate.

Further expansion of the black political movement will also require some thought about other ways to keep political interest high even when there are no elections. We should consider whether a new approach is required to achieve greater influence in the public policy arena. My sense is that a new strategy will be necessary to expand our political momentum and to target it effectively.

One such strategy might involve statewide black caucuses, diverse groups of leaders who convene to settle upon common strategies and plans of action. Caucuses of this type exist today in Arkansas, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, and Virginia. In each of these states, the black caucus exerts its influence on state and local government decisions and in the economic and political arenas. Similar organizations should be started in every state, particularly those with sizable black populations.

During presidential elections, or whenever appropriate, these statewide caucuses could come together in a powerful national coalition to voice blacks' concerns about national issues. This coalition would unite local, state, and national leaders without denying any of them an opportunity to play an important role. State and local officials would direct efforts concerning state and local matters, while national figures, informed and supported by state leaders, would seek to influence national policy and political decisions.

This arrangement need not pull people out of other organizations—such as political parties—which they support. Nor does it distinguish between liberals and conservatives, elected officials and other leaders, scholars and activists. In fact, its genius is its capacity to bring all these elements together to determine the best goals and strategies for blacks to pursue. Furthermore, it begins to reconcile competing interests within the black community by having representatives of these various interests work together toward a larger goal.

Following the 1984 elections, the search for new ways to increase black political influence will begin in earnest. There is a growing sense that more than the ballot is required.

Through politics, policy analysis and recommendations, coalition building, and other means, such as statewide black caucuses, we must pursue our interests vigorously even after the contest for the presidency has been decided.

Eddie N. Williams
President

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Poverty and Public Policy

by William O'Hare

(The author is a senior research associate at the Joint Center.)

The impact of slowly changing public policies often goes unrecognized, allowing the differential effects of these policies on racial groups to remain hidden. For example, gradual changes in some income maintenance and social welfare policies over the past 25 years have benefited whites considerably more than blacks. This is not because of overt discrimination, but because the demographics of the black and white populations are different, and income maintenance policies have helped older Americans far more than youth.

Poverty and Older Americans

When the war on poverty began in the early 1960s, the elderly suffered one of the highest levels of poverty of any group in the society. In 1959, the first year for which the official government poverty measure was used, about 35 percent of people over 65 had incomes below the poverty threshold, compared to only 22.4 percent of the total population. By 1982, however, the poverty rate among the elderly had dropped to 14.6 percent, which was slightly lower than the overall rate of 15 percent.

This drop can be partly attributed to government programs, such as Medicare and Social Security, that provide assistance to older Americans. Recent studies have shown that if all government benefits were eliminated, the poverty rate of the over-65 population would jump to nearly 55 percent. Social Security payments became particularly helpful to the elderly poor after 1974, when they were linked to the rate of inflation. This linkage was one of the most important social welfare policy changes in the post-World War II era.

Children

While the elderly have done relatively well over the last 25 years, children have not. In 1959, the poverty rate for those under 18 was 26.9 percent—1.2 times the rate for the total population. This percentage fell to 21.3 percent in 1982, but the new figure was 1.4 times the poverty rate for the entire population, indicating a relative worsening of child poverty. In other words, while the poverty rate for older Americans fell from 1.57 to 0.97 times the overall rate, the poverty rate for children increased from 1.2 to 1.4 times the general figure.

Two of the factors responsible for the relative increase in poverty among children are easily identified. One is the increased number of families headed by women. These families typically have lower incomes than married-couple families or families headed by men, and the number of female-headed families has increased sharply in the past 25 years. The second factor is the slow rate of increase in welfare payments over the past 25 years. In most states, the increase in welfare payments failed to keep pace with inflation.

Government Policies and Their Effect

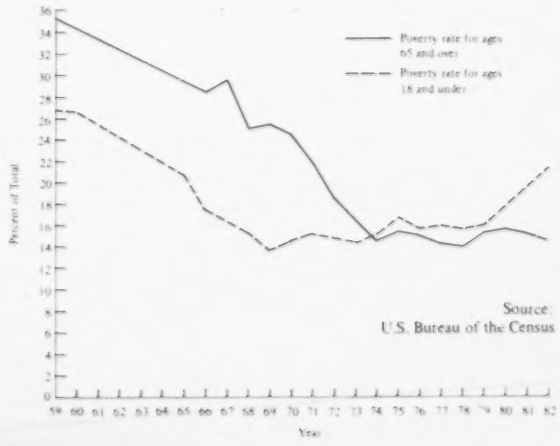
The primary beneficiaries of the Social Security program are the elderly poor, and the main recipients of public assistance are poor families with children. In 1982, the latest year for which figures are available, a family that received Social Security payments got an average of $6,610, and families receiving public assistance averaged just $3,089. Furthermore, increases in payment levels between 1980 and 1982 show that Social Security recipients fared much better than those who received public assistance: inflation increased 17.1 percent during this period, and the average income from Social Security grew by 23.7 percent, while income from public assistance rose by only 11.1 percent.

The reduction of poverty among the elderly and the relative increase in poverty among children have been more detrimental to blacks than whites, because blacks are overrepresented among the young and underrepresented among the elderly. According to data from the Census Bureau, 12.2 percent of the white population is 65 or over, compared to 7.8 percent of the black population. On the other hand, 34.2 percent of blacks are under 18, compared to 25.9 percent of whites.

Furthermore, the aging of the influential baby boom generation suggests that antipoverty policies and programs may focus even more heavily on the older group in the future. Persons born in the late 1940s and 1950s have shaped the outlook of the populace for several decades. In the 1950s, baby-boom demographics led to an emphasis on home and family life. The social activism of the 1960s and early 1970s was due in part to the large number of people in their late teens and twenties. And the surge of the baby-boom population into the home buying market caused the housing boom of the late 1970s.

This group is now beginning to think about and plan for retirement. Given the large number of constituents in the baby-boom generation, it is unlikely that elected officials will introduce any legislation that diminishes income security in retirement. If anything, the inclination is likely to be toward greater income protection for older Americans. But blacks will continue to be overrepresented among the population 18 years old and under and underrepresented among the elderly, because they tend to have more children and die at younger ages than whites. So, as long as government policies favor programs that diminish poverty more among the elderly than among the young, there will be an indirect and disproportionate negative impact on blacks.

Poverty rates for younger and older Americans, 1959-1982



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

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Pay Equity

by Cynthia C. Dittmar

(Ms. Dittmar is assistant director of the Department of Political Education at the American Nurses' Association.)

Equal pay for work of comparable value, or "pay equity," is the major issue in the fight for economic justice for women. Achieving pay equity requires the elimination of wage differentials among jobs that are comparable—although not identical—based on a composite of factors including skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions. At present, occupations that are predominantly female pay far more poorly than comparable occupations that are predominantly male. The Congressional Caucus on Womens' Issues has called pay equity "the women's economic issue of the eighties" because it directly addresses the reasons women continue to earn far less than men.

Although many people believe the situation of employed women has improved markedly, the facts prove otherwise. In spite of federal legislation prohibiting wage discrimination against women—notably Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Pay Act—the earnings gap between men and women has not declined over the past 30 years. In 1955, women earned 64 cents for every dollar earned by men. Today, women earn 61 cents for every dollar earned by men. On average, a woman with a college degree earns $2000 less than a male high school dropout. In state and local governments, women earn 71 cents for every dollar earned by men. In the federal government, the ratio is 63 cents to one dollar, while in the private sector, employed women earn only 56 cents for each dollar men earn.

The persistence of this wage gap despite significant political, economic, and social change over the past several decades prompted a search for explanations and solutions. This search revealed that the primary reason women continue to earn far less than men is that the overwhelming proportion of working women—80 percent—do not work in the same jobs as men, but are concentrated in a narrow range of low-paying, sex-segregated occupations. More than half of all employed women work in occupations that are 75 percent female, and 22 percent work in jobs that are more than 95 percent female. Even among professional women, over half are employed as librarians, elementary and secondary school teachers, and registered nurses—all predominantly female occupations.

In 1981, the National Academy of Sciences released a study entitled *Women, Work, and Wages: Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value* that concluded: "Not only do women do different work than men, but also the work women do is paid less and the more an occupation is dominated by women, the less it pays." The study added that "only a small part of the earnings differences between men and women can be accounted for by differences in education, labor force experience, labor force commitment, or other human capital factors believed to contribute to productivity differences among workers."

Efforts to Achieve Pay Equity

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 describes equal work as that performed under similar working conditions and requiring equal skill, effort, and responsibility. It has been applied exclusively to jobs in which men and women perform the *same* work, leaving unprotected the majority of working women, who are in predominately female occupations. Furthermore, because of this narrow application, only some of the more blatant forms of wage discrimination have been eliminated.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which covers all employment practices, prohibits discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Equal Pay Act was partially incorporated into Title VII, but until a 1981 Supreme Court decision, the applicability of this legislation to comparable—though not identical—jobs performed by men and women remained in question.

Ruling in *County of Washington et al.* v. *Gunther et al.*, the court established that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does indeed apply to wage discrimination cases in which men and women do not fill identical jobs. At the same time it issued the *Gunther* decision, the Supreme Court affirmed a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, *IUE (International Union of Electrical Workers)* v. *Westinghouse Electric Corporation*, which held that the employer violated Title VII by paying predominantly female occupations less than predominantly male occupations, even though the jobs involved were not identical.

Also in 1981, the U.S. District Court for Western Pennsylvania ruled in *Martha L. Taylor et al.* v. *Charley Brothers Company and Teamsters Local 30* that the employer had discriminated against women by assigning them to different jobs than men and paying them lower wages.

Recently, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) won a suit against the State of Washington *(AFSCME* v. *State of Washington)*, which alleged a violation of Title VII, charging that the state paid women in predominantly female occupations less than men in comparable, but predominantly male, occupations.

Emboldened by these court decisions, pay equity advocates have begun pushing for better enforcement of federal laws pertaining to sex-based wage discrimination. In December 1983, for example, the American Nurses' Association (ANA) filed a charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against the state of Illinois, charging that the state is violating Title VII by paying predominantly female occupations less than comparable male occupations. The ANA intends to pursue this claim through litigation. State and local governments, too, have marshalled an attack on sex-based wage discrimination among jobs that are not identical. A forthcoming survey published by the National Committee on Pay Equity identifies over 100initiatives undertaken by school districts, counties, municipalities, and state legislatures in at least 30 states. These initiatives include new laws, amendments, enforcement efforts, and executive branch policy decisions. Several states have funded job evaluation studies to identify the extent of wage depression in female-dominated jobs.

In 1981, California passed a law that established a policy of setting salaries for female-dominated state jobs on the basis of the relative value of the work when compared to male-dominated jobs. In the same year, three pay equity resolutions were adopted in Hawaii. And, in the first action of its kind,

a 1982 Minnesota law established both the state's commitment to pay equity and a procedure for earmarking a certain amount of the budget for pay adjustment. These are just a few examples of state and local government initiatives.

Labor unions have also been active in the pursuit of pay equity. The issue has become a powerful stimulus for the unionization of women, largely because, on average, working women who belong to unions earn over a third more than nonunion women. Some unions have obtained or approached pay equity agreements through the collective bargaining process. For example, a 1981 agreement between a health care workers' union and the state of Connecticut requires the state to set up a special "pay equity" fund equal to 1 percent of payroll to achieve pay equity. In San Jose, California, municipal employees won pay equity raises of between 5 and 10 percent for employees in predominantly female jobs. In 1980, the Communications Workers of America and AT&T negotiated a joint labor/management Occupational Job Evaluation Committee to develop a new job evaluation system for nonmanagerial employees.

Controversy over Pay Equity

Although pay equity advocates have stepped up their activities, the concept of pay equity is certainly not free of controversy; in fact, it may be one of the most hotly debated issues in labor relations today.

Opponents of pay equity stress the difficulty of comparing dissimilar jobs for the purpose of setting wages—the "apples and oranges" argument. Many employers have argued that it is nearly impossible to design a system that accurately assesses the relative value to them of dissimilar jobs. Moreover, they point out the difficulty of deciding even what criteria are appropriate for comparing dissimilar jobs.

Proponents of pay equity, on the other hand, hold that dissimilar jobs may involve equivalent or comparable tasks and responsibilities. Evaluation systems do exist that analyze jobs in terms of these factors to set wages. In fact, pay equity proponents argue, employers have been making comparisons among nonidentical jobs for decades to establish salaries; employer initiated and administered job classification systems have existed for nearly 50 years as a basis for organizational hierarchies and a justification for wage structures.

Another area of controversy involves the role of market forces—that is, the economics of supply and demand—in setting wage rates. Opponents of pay equity argue that establishing wage rates interferes with market forces. They see market forces as the most accurate gauge of the value of a particular job or skill and reject as unworkable any system of measure that overrides market considerations.

Pay equity supporters counter that current wage differentials based on market forces are simply discriminatory: the market undervalues jobs dominated by women. The most common way employers establish salaries is to pay what other employers pay for similar jobs. This is called paying market wage rates, but these general rates may well reflect prior discrimination by employers. In fact, reliance on the market wage rate is one of the principal methods of maintaining depressed wages for women.

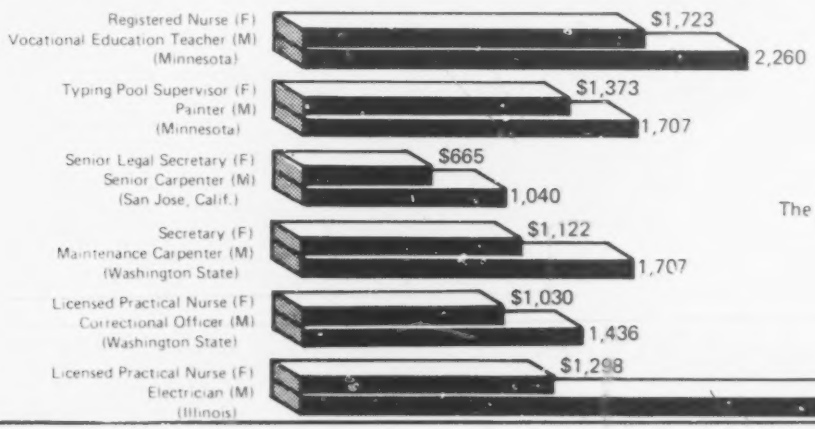
A third area of controversy concerns the costs of implementing pay equity. Opponents say that the cost of raising the wages of all predominantly female occupations would be enormous and prohibitive. According to their estimates, the cost of implementing pay equity would range from $2 billion to $150 billion.

Supporters of pay equity are also concerned about costs, but they assert that women who are victims of wage discrimination are currently bearing an enormous cost. More importantly, they argue, the high cost of correcting discriminatory practices is no justification for violating the law.

Pay equity, more than any other economic issue, appeals to and unites working women. And now that several candidates have targeted the women's vote, pay equity is likely to become a major political issue as well. In 1984, more women than ever before will be voting their pocketbooks. Although years are likely to pass before the controversy is resolved, the issue will remain near the top of the civil rights agenda for women's groups, labor organizations, and others interested in eliminating sex-based wage discrimination.

PAY INEQUITY

Below is a comparison of predominantly male and female occupations judged to be of comparable worth, based on a study of monthly salaries for Government jobs in designated locations.



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